

2015 ANNUAL OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS
BOONE CREEK ALLOTMENT
SALMON-CHALLIS NATIONAL FOREST

Below is your Annual Operating Instructions (AOI) for the Boone Creek Allotment discussed at the spring meeting on April 15, 2015. This AOI addresses Forest Service administered lands within the Boone Creek Allotment. Please review your Term Grazing Permit for grazing utilization, range improvement maintenance, and salting standards. Actual on-dates and off-dates are dependant on range readiness and when allowable use standards are met. The Forest Service may approve changes to the grazing rotation in consultation with the permittees to address range condition situations that may occur due to weather related circumstances.

<u>Permittee</u>	<u>Term</u>	<u>Suspended</u>	<u>Non-Use</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>Season</u>
Challis Creek Cattle Company	986	394	0	592	6/6-10/15
Boone Creek Partnership	25	0	0	25	6/6-10/15
Churn Dasher Ranch	264	0	0	100	6/6-10/15
				164	7/20-10/15 Trucked
Total	1275	394	0	881	6/6 – 10/15

<u>Grazing Unit Rotation</u>	<u>Estimated Days</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Garden Creek	10	6/6-6/15
Right Fork Boone	22	6/16-7/7
Road Creek	13	7/8-7/20
Ramey Creek	31	7/21-8/20
Fox Creek	18	8/21-9/7
Main Boone/Castle Cr.*	29	9/8-10/6
Rock Creek	9	10/7-10/15

These dates are an estimate and may vary \pm 2-5 days under normal circumstances. Particular attention will be made to moving based on resource conditions rather than strictly adhering to dates and estimated days. Moves will be authorized by Rangeland Manager based on resource conditions.

* Trailing to Castle Creek will be done down the East Fork Road and the livestock will be trailed through that portion of the Wildhorse Allotment known as No Man's Land, between Deer Creek And Rider Creek, across the East Fork of the Big Lost to the Castle Creek Unit.

The NRCS SNOTEL sites across the Lost River Ranger District currently range from 64-90% of the Water Year average through the month of March. The Upper Big Lost River ranges from 70-80% of average and the Bear Canyon and Smiley Mountain SNOTEL sites both show 71% and 70% of average respectively. All indications show that cumulative drought impacts could persist or worsen this year. If this occurs the Forest Service expects that cattle may need to be moved more quickly through units and removed prior to the scheduled off date. Forage production is

dependent on growing season (April through September) temperatures and precipitation. Even when drought conditions subside there is a lag time for plants to physically recover from the stress of the drought.

There will be fewer livestock on the allotment this year following permit action on the Challis Creek Cattle permit. The permittees voluntarily ran fewer cattle in 2014, so the anticipated use would be expected to be similar to 2014, dependent on growing season precipitation.

Modifications to the grazing unit rotation and estimated days of use must be requested by the permittee in advance and approved by the Forest Service. The Forest Service may initiate modifications in consultation with the permittees when changes to scheduled use are needed due to unexpected deficiencies in range conditions such as but not limited to: predatory issues, forage production, soil moisture, precipitation, insect damage, fire, hail, plant growth/recovery during drought condition.

It is imperative that permittees on both the Boone Creek and Wildhorse allotments maintain their portion of the boundary fence west of Castle Creek. When grazing the Castle Creek pasture ensure that Wildhorse cattle are not grazing the areas adjacent to Castle Creek on the Wildhorse Allotment. Permittees will contact Wildhorse and coordinate grazing operations. While it is known that livestock will sometimes travel between the two allotments in this area it is important that the use on the neighboring allotment is kept to a minimum.

The electric fence will need to be put up around the wet meadow in Little Boone Creek and it may be dropped the last 3 days to let livestock utilize the meadow. Riding will be necessary to keep the cattle dispersed in the units and keep them from congregating on riparian areas and causing resource damage.

You will be weaning calves on the Forest again this year around September 7th. Permittees will advise the FS if cattle are to be weaned at the corrals in the Fox Creek Unit or Johnson's corrals. This plan will be re-evaluated around the end of July based on forage conditions and changed if needed through close conversation with the Forest.

The Forest Service and the permittees will work together to identify appropriate salt and mineral locations which are to be away from streams and aspen stands. Motorized travel for allotment management needs to be requested in advance to the District Ranger, who then may authorize use to a specific route through a letter. Permittees may request to deliver salt to central locations to then distribute using horses.

- Ramey Creek: south above the water tank; north- near trails
- Little Boone: between forks and riparian
- Rider Creek: 1 mile up road

There are permitted recreational events held on and around your allotment this year.

- July 10-12, ATV Rally with guided tours of the Lost River Ranger District.
- August 12-15, Standhope Ultra Marathon.

Although the Bike Race through Copper Basin has not been scheduled yet this year it typically been held on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend which would be September 6 of this year.

Allowable Use: End of season 4-inch stubble height on hydric sedges & grasses is required along the greenline of riparian areas. A patchy or uneven use pattern along the greenline will usually result in stubble height being met. While adequate regrowth may occur under average growing season conditions, the opposite may be true during below average conditions. Special attention should be made to drier weather conditions. It is recommended a stubble height trigger above 4 inches be used in drier conditions to plan cattle moves. While triggers are used in determining the movement of cattle, it is not necessarily indicative of the condition of the 'green line' along the creek. Examples: Little Boone Creek key area is located where cattle trail in and out, thus may not be an indicator of whether the pasture meets minimum range standards; right Fork Boone Creek key area is a dead-end where the cattle come in from the top, but don't leave unless taken back out.

The drier mesic meadows adjacent to streams and springs should be watched to ensure that 50% use is not exceeded. These meadows are of concern across the district and more focus is going to be put on use levels in these areas. While all adjacent meadows should be looked at, the drier meadows have less chance of regrowth and therefore are of highest concern. Permittee in its management has considered the overall condition not just at or near the triggers, to gauge the overall condition. The upland annual use level of 50% should be used to manage the dry meadows and your rangeland management specialist will work with you to determine when a desired use level has been met, so that everyone understands what the meadows should look like after livestock use. Woody Browse use of riparian shrubs will not exceed 50% of new leader production.

Permittees and riders should watch upland graze use closely in the Fox Creek Unit between Fox Creek and Little Boone Creek, especially throughout the old prescribed burns. Utilization should not exceed 50% for these areas or any other uplands on the allotment.

Riparian areas with greenlines dominated by Kentucky bluegrass and tufted hairgrass should also receive special attention to achieve end of season stubble height. Greenlines dominated by these plants have less bank stability than those dominated by deep-rooted plants and are sometimes in a lower state of ecological condition. They should be managed to increase the amount of stable hydric sedges, grasses, and shrubs where appropriate. Some intermittent streams will never support hydric vegetation and in those cases are either inappropriate monitoring sites or should not be held to a hydric stubble height standard.

Other factors should be considered for planning cattle moves between units. These include prevention of stream bank trampling, increase in rate of stubble height removal, changes in livestock behavior, changes in grazing preference from grasses and grass-like plants to young willows and other shrubs, large groups of cattle congregating in fence corners, at gates, or riparian areas for long periods of time.

Designated Monitoring Areas (DMA's): DMA's are used to monitor representative riparian areas within a grazing unit which establishes a record of utilization and trend. The information from the DMA is also used to plan cattle moves, determine if end of season indicators are met, and to evaluate whether current management is effective or needs to be modified. Permittee monitoring, documentation and photos are encouraged before entering and when leaving each unit. Permittees will conduct a species inventory preseason, to record the dominant plants.

The long term data gathered in 2014 indicates that the greenline ecological condition along three of the four sites monitored (Little Boone Creek, Rider Creek, and Road Creek) have static or upward trends and are at late seral to potential natural community (PNC) condition. The fourth site is along the East Fork of Boone Creek in the Right Fork Boone Creek Unit. This site was at late seral in 2010 and data from 2014 suggests that there is a downward trend to mid seral condition. Close review of the data indicates that some of this change in rating could be attributed to difficult identification of grasses in 2014, leading to many entries of mesic grass while in 2010 there was a fair amount of tufted hairgrass.

The significance of this is that tufted hairgrass is a late seral species while mesic grasses are counted as early seral and therefore by identifying the grasses as mesic grass instead of tufted hairgrass the overall rating would be lower to some degree. A review of pictures indicates that there may still be some slight downward trend of the site, but likely not to the degree that the data suggests.

Management should address ensuring that the Right Fork Boone Creek riparian area has adequate management to bring the riparian area back to late seral ecological condition. The site should meet the four inch stubble height on an annual basis. The four inch end of season stubble height has not been exceeded in the four years between monitoring. This site should be monitored again in three years (2017) at a time of year when tufted hairgrass is easily identified to determine trend. If the site is still below late seral at that time then a change of some sort may be warranted (i.e. greater stubble height requirement or an alteration indicator).

Little Boone Creek DMA has shown that the desired condition of at least later seral ecological condition can be maintained by achieving a 3-4 inch stubble height on an annual basis. This small stream should continue to be monitored to ensure it remains at PNC, although a three inch stubble height on some years should not indicate that the site will immediately show a downward trend.

Riding: Provide help to the rider in back riding and in their absence to maintain smooth operations on the allotment. Early pastures will be monitored to ensure that the unit is clean for the remainder of the grazing season.

Cattle are not to graze around the lakes in Bellas Canyon. Continue to monitor the Bellas Lakes area for livestock use while using the Ramey Creek pasture. The Forest Service will continue to evaluate the potential drift fence location to reduce possibilities of livestock going off the allotment around Bellas Lakes. The Forest and permittees may install a temporary electric fence near the Ramey Creek Unit boundary to Bellas Lakes to deter livestock from traveling to the lakes.

Cleaning Grazing Units: Livestock need to begin moving from a unit prior to the stubble height standard being met to ensure allowable use standards are met. This is especially important during drought conditions. In most cases 7 days should be adequate. Permittees should be prepared to assist range riders in checking that the unit cleaned stays clean. Range riders should keep permittees informed of problems cleaning grazed units. Bulls should be kept with the main

herd or removed from the allotment when they disrupt herd management. Frequent back-riding may indicate there is a herd management problem. It is also the permittee's responsibility to correct problems caused by drift from other units on the allotment. Any cattle from neighboring allotments should be taken care of as neighbors and if that is ineffective contact the Range Specialist and inform them of the situation.

Fence & Water Improvements: Please refer to Part 3 of your Term Grazing Permit. Allotment boundary fences should be maintained prior to cattle entering the allotment, interior fences should also be maintained prior to cattle entering a new unit. Existing improvements should be maintained each year before requesting new improvements. In years of non-use maintenance of improvements is still a requirement.

Further evaluate the potential for some pond to trough conversions on the allotment. Forest will provide materials to reconstruct a portion of the Ramey and Road Creek boundary fence and the Rock Creek Forest/BLM boundary fence. Permittees can request materials in advance and if they are available they may pick them up.

Weed Free Hay: In accordance with State Law, please ensure that range riders bring hay that is certified and tagged noxious weed free.

Gray Wolf: The Boone Creek Allotment is an area of known wolf activity. Any knowledge of wolf activity on the allotment needs to be exchanged between the permittees and the Forest Service. If any livestock are found dead or injured and predation is suspected the local Idaho Fish and Game Conservation Officer should be contacted as soon as possible. If a kill is not reported immediately it may be impossible to confirm.

Grazing Fees: The grazing fees for the 2015 season are \$1.69/head month. Your grazing fee payment will need to be received prior to turning livestock out on the National Forest. Receipt of payment could take up to 2 weeks from the date payment is sent.

Actual Use Report: An Actual Use Report will be mailed to you shortly before cattle leave the allotment. This form is to be completed and returned to the Lost River Ranger District two weeks after you have removed livestock from your allotment. The association President will need to provide a consolidated report with the numbers and dates when cattle entered the allotment, moved from unit to unit, when cattle were removed from the allotment. Each permittee will need to provide an individual report with dates when their cattle entered and left the allotment.

This information is used for the purpose of evaluating and analyzing: grazing allotment and grazing unit use, compliance with annual operating instructions, and planning next season's grazing management strategy

Applications for refunds/credits for unused portions of your allotment must be requested and filed separately. Please contact our office if you need an application for refund/credit.

Questions and assistance regarding these instructions should be directed to Diane Weaver or the District Rangeland Management Specialist at 588-3400.